

# Calcutta University

## Convocation Address

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By

P. N. Banerjee

Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University



Saturday, the 19th March, 1949

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YOUR EXCELLENCY, FELLOW GRADUATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The convention of nearly a century accords to me the privilege of addressing you now. My first words are words of the most cordial and sincere welcome to you, Sir, the Chancellor of this great University. Your scholarship, your devotion to duty, your patriotism have all been harnessed to the cause of education in this province. In recent years, the University inaugurated a system of having a Public Orator for the Convocation. The addresses delivered by our Public Orators during the last twelve years have been sources of inspiration to all of us. This year our first invitee Mrs. Sarojini Naidu could not come. Her silvery voice has been hushed into eternal silence. She was a daughter of Bengal, one of our first Kamala Lecturers. The next two invitees—the Hon'ble Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Education Minister of India, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were unable to come—the first due to his numerous preoccupations and the second for reasons of health. Both of them belong to Bengal. Dr. Rajendra Prasad passed all his examinations, beginning from the Entrance Examination to the Master's degree examinations in Arts and Law, from this University. He was for some time a Professor of the University Law College, Calcutta.

May I now offer our congratulations to His Excellency Sri Chakravorti Rajagopalacharia, our first Indian Chancellor and the first Indian Governor-General ? During my absence, on public duty, from this country in the Middle East, at a Special Convocation the Senate conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Law. I

deplored my absence deeply. I had no option in the matter. I had to go out of India on a personal request from him.

We offer our felicitations to two of our distinguished sons, The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Bijankumar Mukherji and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ramaprasad Mookerjee. One has been elevated to the bench of the Federal Court, the other to the bench of the High Court of Calcutta. The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Bijankumar Mukherji was a distinguished student of this University. He served the University Law College as a Professor for nearly twenty years of his life. He adorned the bench of the Calcutta High Court for more than twelve years. He is yet one of our Ordinary Fellows. The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ramaprasad Mookerjee has faithfully and devotedly served his *Alma Mater* for more than a quarter of a century continuously in diverse capacities: as an Ordinary Fellow, a member of the Board of Accounts, a member of the Syndicate, as Vice-President of the University Finance Committee, as Chairman and a member of various Boards of Studies in the University. He was a lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of Higher Studies in English Language and Literature for more than fifteen years. He was also a professor in the University Law College for about the same period. Of those devoted sons of this University who have rendered conspicuous and signal service to our *Alma Mater*, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ramaprasad Mookerjee is one. He is the bearer of the great name of the great architect of the University of Calcutta. He has inherited the renown, the greatness and the genius of his great father. We offer our congratulations also to the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sudhiranjan Das, puisne judge, Calcutta High Court, on

his appointment as Chief Justice of the newly created East Punjab High Court. He was in early years of his professional career, a professor in the University Law College, Calcutta.

On your behalf and on my behalf I offer our congratulations to Professor P. M. S. Blackett, Fellow, Royal Society. He was our Bidhubhushan Ray Lecturer for the year 1947. To him was allotted the Sir Devaprasad Sarvadikari Gold Medal for the year 1948. That gold medal goes to the greatest scientist of the year. Professor Blackett has now won the coveted Nobel Prize in Science. He divided the atom.

It is customary on this auspicious occasion to remember with pride and gratitude our colleagues and fellow workers who have gone to a world from which there is no return. In Mr. Debiprasad Khaitan we have lost the services of a great lawyer who devoted the major part of his life to commerce, industry and this University. He was one of our Ordinary Fellows and was a distinguished member of the Faculty of Law. It was due, in the main, to his efforts that Commerce studies in this University have advanced. The newly constituted Board of Studies in Commerce was the result of his untiring zeal. In Rai Bahadur Jnanchandra Ghosh this University and the country have lost the services of a great teacher and an administrator. Nearly sixty years ago he started life as a professor in the Uttarpara College. He served the Scottish Church College faithfully and well for long years. He was elected a Fellow, under the Universities Act of 1904, from the constituency of Registered Graduates, in 1908. He served the University in various capacities—as an Ordinary Fellow, as a member of the Syndicate, as Inspector of Colleges and

as Registrar for more than thirty years. He died full of years and full of honours. In Sir Zahidur Rahim Zahid Suhrawardy we have lost a scholar of distinction, a lawyer and a jurist of eminence and one of those rare personalities affectionately termed 'nature's gentleman'. He was a member of the Senate from 1917 to 1927 and from 1930 to 1945. The breach in the continuity of his services was due to unfortunate circumstances over which he had no control. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts for a considerable length of time. He was also a Dean of the Faculty of Law. He served the country with devotion as one of the puisne judges of the Calcutta High Court for more than fifteen years. In Dr. Ramendranath Ghosh we have lost by death, one of those quiet scholars who live for the sake of learning. He was connected with the Calcutta Medical College as a surgeon and served the University as a member of the Senate from 1946. He died young. In Professor Benimadhab Barua we have not only lost the services of the University Professor of Pali, but we have lost a scholar of international repute whose interpretation of Buddhism and whose studies and investigations in the domain of oriental learning, specially in the branches of art, architecture, archaeology and pre-Buddhistic Indian philosophy, and Pali literature in general, cast a glorious halo over the University. He was connected with the departments of Post-graduate Studies in Pali, Sanskrit and History since its inception in 1917. In Professor Praphullachandra Ghosh I have lost my master. He was a professor of English, Presidency College and lecturer in the Post-graduate Department of Studies in English Language and Literature for more than thirty-five years of his life. For some time he was an Ordinary Member of

the Senate of this University. He placed at the disposal of the Board of Studies in English and other Boards of Studies in this University, his wide experience, his mature judgment, his incisive scholarship. He made an endowment of Rs. 30,000 for translating a series of classical books in Sanskrit, Pali etc. into Bengali, called after his illustrious father, Ishanchandra Ghosh, who was one of our most distinguished head masters. Professor Ghosh did more for his *Alma Mater*. At his desire his entire library worth about Rs. 50,000 was made over to the University by his wife after his death. In Pandit Asoknath Bhattacharyya Sastri, this University and the country have lost the services of a brilliant Sanskrit scholar. He was an example of perfect manners which belonged to century-old tradition of our country. He was a lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of Sanskrit for nearly twelve years. The empire of learning in Sanskrit in this country and this University looked for great achievements from him. He died young and our hopes have gone with him. In Mr. Saratlal Biswas this University has lost a great teacher in the Post-Graduate Department of Geology. His is a loss which it is difficult to assess. In Mr. Manmathanath Ray we have lost one of the most devoted sons of this University and of this province. He was a professor of the University Law College for more than thirty years of his life. He was a member of the Senate for thirty-three long years. He rendered devoted services to the Syndicate and to various University bodies. His great father, Mahendranath Ray, was the first elected Fellow of this University. The father and the son rendered signal services to this University for a period of more than sixty years.

We mourn here today, the death of the Rt. Hon'ble Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, our Tagore Law Professor for 1924. He was one of our Public Orators who addressed the Convocation in 1941. Universities in India have lost in him, a philosopher and a friend, the country a devoted and a loyal son. We mourn here today the death of Mr. Kirsansankar Roy who was appointed a lecturer in the Post-Graduate Department of History. Mr. Roy's services to politics will be counted and recounted by his numerous countrymen and countrywomen in years to come.

Members of the Convocation, will you rise in your seats and pray in silence for two minutes for the departed great?

Exactly a year ago, when I had the privilege of addressing the Convocation, I entertained fond hopes that normalcy would soon return and that passions would die and orgies of violence and vulgarity would no longer blacken our beloved soil. My fond hopes have not yet come true. We live in a world today under the shadow of panic. The atom bomb frightens us to the core of our hearts. The sword of Damocles still hangs overhead. The dream of one-world is almost melting away. Indeed, the world appears to be surrounded by an atmosphere of violence, jealousy and dread. Force seems to be the solvent still of the ills from which humanity has suffered in aeons untold. We have borne the shock of two world wars. We tremble at the thought of the advent of a third world war. Lack of adequate supplies and mounting prices of food, clothes and other necessities of life have added to the sense of frustration and disappointment of the common man. Uncertainty in life seems to have increased. In an atmosphere surcharged with electrical possibilities we live and

move. Refugee students and their parents from across our borders still pour in. They come to us hopeless, homeless and cheerless—uprooted from their soil. The complex problems of modern society have become more complex. Yet those amongst us who have faith and who believe in the resurrection of the human soul have to build plans for construction out of destruction. The chaos in the world today must be converted into cosmos.

Two great events in the domain of education, and in the life of the nation, stand pre-eminent in their peculiar relations to this University. The Government of India have appointed a Universities Commission, consisting of distinguished educationists from India and abroad for the purpose of replanning, refashioning, reconstructing our system of University education. They visited this University and had conferences with the Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate, principals of colleges, professors and teachers in representative organisations and institutions. We await with deep interest their findings and recommendations. This University faces this time the fourth Commission, in the course of its century-old chequered life. In 1882, the Hunter Commission made its recommendations. The Chairman of the Commission became one of our Vice-Chancellors. Its labours, at any rate, gave birth to the great architect of the University of Calcutta. The Hon'ble Maulana Abul Kalam Azad terms it as the 'first University in modern India'. The second Universities Commission of 1902, appointed by Lord Curzon, made recommendations which constituted the basis for the passing of the Universities Act of 1904. It was an Act both of a progressive and of a retrograde character. It visualized the creation of a teaching University. We are still

living under this Act. Custom and convention, time and distance, the progress of ideas, the adoption of a democratic way of life, all have made inroads on the statute book. The third Commission appointed by the Government of Lord Chelmsford, made a close survey of all centres of learning and culture throughout the length and breadth of India. It was presided over by that eminent liberal scholar, Sir Michael Sadler. Its recommendations have led to the separation of the jurisdiction between Secondary education and University education in most parts of India. They have stimulated advanced study and research. Organisations controlling education in the various Universities in India, have retained their academic and democratic character. In the case of Calcutta, the fourteen volumes of the Sadler Commission Report lie forgotten like the fourteen points of President Woodrow Wilson. We look forward to momentous changes in the system of education in India when the recommendations of the fourth Universities Commission are executed by our Governments at the centre and in the provinces. Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the Chairman of this Commission, is a very familiar and beloved figure with us. This University made him what he is today. He was connected with us in diverse capacities for more than twenty years of his crowded scholarly life.

In my first Convocation address delivered to you after the attainment of independence by India in 1947, I traced the century-old story of the birth, the growth and the development of this University. May I crave your indulgence to give you a picture of the University of Calcutta, my University and your University, today? We stand on the threshold of great changes. Could I

say a few words about its achievements, its aspirations and its failures? I, for one, am not ashamed of failures. Failures spur us on to fresher, greater, nobler activities. I am fond of giving two historical illustrations. If Jesus Christ has lived through death these twenty centuries, it is because His followers failed Him in the deserts of Syria. If Napoleon had not lived like a caged lion for two thousand days and more in the rocky island of St. Helena, history would not have given the foremost place to him as a soldier, administrator and as a man of action.

The activities of the University of Calcutta centre round direct supervision over advanced studies and research in Calcutta. Secondly, it exercises jurisdiction over its colleges and high schools, till today, through affiliation and periodical inspection. Thirdly, it exercises control over both, through its examinations. It is not perhaps realised that we are the biggest teaching and research institute in India today. In the department of Arts, we teach eighteen subjects up to the Master's degree with their various groups and sub-groups and other ramifications. They are : (1) Sanskrit, (2) English, (3) Modern Indian Languages (Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Hindi, Urdu), (4) French, (5) Pali, (6) Arabic, (7) Persian, (8) Comparative Philology, (9) Mental and Moral Philosophy, (10) History, (11) Ancient Indian History and Culture, (12) Islamic History and Culture, (13) Economics, (14) Commerce, (15) Political Science, (16) Pure Mathematics, (17) Anthropology and (18) Psychology. In the department of Science we have arrangements for study and research up to the Master's degree, in twelve different subjects, *viz.*, (1) Applied Mathematics, (2) Physics, (3) Applied Physics, (4) Chemistry, (5) Applied Chemistry.

(6) Botany, (7) Physiology, (8) Geology, (9) Zoology, (10) Geography, (11) Statistics and (12) Radio-Physics and Electronics.

The number of students reading today, in the department of Arts in the fifth-year and the sixth-year classes, is 1484. The number of post-graduate Research Scholars and Research Fellows in 1948-49 in the same department is 20. The number of students in the post-graduate department in Science in the various subjects, is 476. The number of Research Scholars and Research Fellows is 40. We maintain out of our fee fund, our revenues from private endowments and from subventions from the Government of India as also the Government of West Bengal, nineteen University Professorships in the department of Arts, twelve such Professorships in the department of Science. They are assisted by a staff of 172 other teachers in the department of Arts, and 118 teachers in the department of Science. Two of our University professors are Fellows of the Royal Society of England. Most of our professors have earned world reputation. This University has indeed been a nursery for technical and scientific staff as also of the judges of the Superior Courts of Record in India. From the post-graduate department of Science alone we have lent the services of eighteen Professors and Lecturers to the various departments of Government. From the department of Arts, similarly, we have lent the services of at least ten teachers. Most of the judges of the Calcutta High Court, I need hardly tell you, had been professors of the University Law College, Calcutta. Last year I regretted the competition between this University and the Governments at the centre and in the provinces in regard to the recruitments of

technical and technological staff. I deplored our inability to pay competitive salaries to the members of our staff who have been taken away from us. I have now reconciled myself to the position that this University is, after all, the great recruiting ground for national services in the State, and we shall in the future, as we have done in the past, train up young men for purposes of not only advanced study and research in the Universities, but also technical and technological services to a modern State.

We have decided to advance the bounds of advanced study and research in medical science in Calcutta. In the next session we will see the advent of a third department of post-graduate studies, *viz.*, Post-Graduate Studies in Medicine. I make the statement with the full concurrence of the Hon'ble Dr. Bidhanchandra Roy, the Premier of this province, that certain hospitals in Calcutta like the Presidency General Hospital or the Sambhu Nath Pundit Hospital to which students are not now attached, will be utilised by the Post-Graduate Council of Studies in Medicine of this University. Committees have been set up for the purpose of conferment of the status of University teachers upon our college teachers and other eminent scholars.

The Post-Graduate departments of Arts and Science were established in 1917. During the course of the last thirty-three years this University has had the proud privilege of presenting to the world five hundred volumes of original contributions, apart from isolated contributions which the teachers of this University have made to the learned journals throughout the world. We instituted an intermediate Research Degree of D.Phil. during the tenure of my office. The

University proposes to allow medical graduate researchers also to proceed to the same degree. The number of candidates in different subjects who have registered themselves for the D.Phil. degree this year alone, has been 115 in the department of Arts and 92 in the department of Science. The number of students who have submitted themselves for the Doctorate degrees is 17—six in the department of Arts and eleven in the department of Science. The number of students who have been admitted to the degrees of D.Litt. and D.Sc. is two in Arts and five in Science. In the department of Medicine we have instituted two post-graduate diplomas, *viz.*, the Diploma in Ophthalmic Medicine and Surgery, and the Diploma in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, for which examinations have been held this year. For the first time in the history of this University an examination in the Master's degree of Engineering (Public Health) is being held. Last year four students were admitted to the highest degree of the University in humanities, *viz.*, D.Litt. Six students were admitted to the parallel degree of D.Sc. in the department of Science. We had one student who passed the very difficult examination of Master of Surgery. I said last year that Engineering regulations of this University had been thoroughly overhauled during my first term of office. The Government of West Bengal has granted additional funds to the Civil Engineering College in Calcutta, one of our affiliated colleges, for further expansion. This college, we must not forget, had little chance of development. It has served the needs of at least three provinces, *viz.*, Bengal, Assam and Orissa. I am hoping that post-graduate courses of study and research in the Faculty of Engineering, will soon come into

existence. A criticism is often levelled against this University about the universality of its undertakings by custodians of public finance. They do not take cognisance of our great achievements.

Apart from direct control and supervision which this University exercises over advanced post-graduate study and research we have undertaken direct instruction in regard to a number of Diploma courses, *viz.*, (1) the Diploma in Fine Arts, (2) the Diploma in Librarianship, (3) the Diploma in Spoken English, (4) the Diploma in Social Welfare Course, (5) the Diploma in Domestic Science for women teacher students, (6) the Diploma in Soap Technology. The University College of Science is, with our concurrence, now regarded by the Government of India as an All-India Institute of Scientific study and research.

The Institute of Jute Technology about which I addressed you at the last Convocation, will, I hope, start functioning from the next year. The construction work of the Institute building, hampered occasionally due to difficulties in the matter of obtaining materials, has been making steady progress and I hope the building will be completed in course of the next six months.

The All-India Institute of Social Welfare for which the Government of India have promised financial subvention, will provide facilities for advanced training to our Labour Welfare Officers. It will also provide instruction for those whose services will be requisitioned by the State as hospital almoners and other officers. It is a matter of genuine pleasure to me that the department has now captured the imagination of the general public. In this, may I claim, on behalf of this University that ours is the first Indian University to

introduce the course of study which has been recognised by both Industry and Governments? A formal request has been made to us by the Government of Pakistan for reserving a number of seats in the Social Welfare Course for the training of their Labour Welfare Officers.

This University maintains two of the most well-equipped and up-to-date libraries in India. The Central Library has more than two hundred thousand volumes of books in it and the University Law College Library takes a legitimate pride in its spacious hall and in its one hundred thousand volumes of legal work. Apart from these libraries, we maintain three museums, (1) the Asutosh Museum, (2) the Commercial Museum and (3) the Anthropological Museum for the benefit of our young post-graduate scholars.

Last year at the Convocation, I had the privilege of stressing the importance of three different departments of studies: the first was Agriculture, the second was Architecture and the third one was Music. This University framed its regulations for the I.Sc. examination in Agriculture more than a year ago. They were sent up to the Government of West Bengal for sanction. They still await that sanction. In the mean time, private enterprise has come to the assistance of this University. One of my pupils, Raja Narasingha Malla Deb of Jhargram, has offered to donate the sum of one lac of rupees in cash, and has also offered us the use of hundred acres of land for the purpose of establishing an Agricultural College at Jhargram in Midnapore. The University has accepted the generous offer. The college requires for proper functioning a capital expenditure of three lacs and fifty thousand rupees and an annual recurring expenditure of fifty thousand rupees. This college, when established, will be the

first of its kind in this province. Under the terms of two generous endowments made by Raja Guru Prasad Singh of Khaira and Professor Nilratan Dhar, this University will have to maintain two Professorships in the department of Agriculture. Their services will necessarily be utilised for Agricultural education in this country. We propose immediately to add a new subject to our Master's degree, namely, the Master's degree in Agriculture. For this purpose, the Government of West Bengal has generously offered to the University one hundred and fifty acres of land at Haringhatta—about thirty-six miles from Calcutta. The proposed school of Agriculture along with the proposed River Research Institute to be established by the Government at the same place, as also poultry and the husbandry farm of the Government there, will, I hope, in future, be well integrated.

The scheme for the establishment of the School of Architecture has not yet materialised. Difference of opinion seems to have arisen with regard to the scope and object of the study of Architecture in the Faculty of Engineering and in the Faculty of Arts. The regulations framed by the University and sanctioned by Government for both the purposes do not overlap. The scope and object of each are different.

I shall now give you a picture of education in our affiliated colleges and in our affiliated schools. Our province has, since World War II, been suffering from the pangs of hunger. The hunger for education amongst our people is as great as the hunger for food. One has been assuaged by a compulsory system of Rationing. Will the other remain contented by the slogan for efficiency? One must not forget that our State has deliberately determined upon two courses of state policy:

one is that the Indian Union will be a secular state and the other is that the Indian Union will insist on a democratic way of life. Our Constituent Assembly has decided upon adult franchise for the whole of the Union and has abolished all distinctions in the matter of sex, colour and creed. This involves education to our masters of the future, and our masters of the future in universal adult franchise are expected to number one hundred and seventy million human souls. Ten per cent of the total population of India, at the last census of 1941, was reported to be able to read and write their names. Franchise on symbols, on personalities, on creeds without discrimination of persons and parties, is bound to be a dismal failure. Education is not the politics of a nation but it must constitute its policy. If this policy is correctly interpreted, we require more education, but we require better education.

On the 15th of August, 1947, the day of the partition, this University was left with fifty-seven colleges of all denominations in the various Faculties. The number of schools shrank down from 2,300 to 795. Such has been the hunger for education in this province that within the course of the last eighteen months the number of colleges has gone up to 87. Of these, twelve colleges are exclusively intended for women. Three have women's sections, separate from men's departments and 12 admit co-education as a principle of admission. Of these 87 colleges, 37 are situated in Calcutta and the rest are in the districts. Imphal, Manipur and Cooch-Behar still retain their filial relationships with us. The number of high schools within the province has increased from 795 to more than 1,000. The States of Sikkim, Cooch-Behar and Manipur, the Andaman and the Nicobar Islands with thirty high schools; are still

within the jurisdiction of this University. I may also mention in this connection that Chandernagore, yet a possession outside the Indian Union, maintains its colleges and schools under us. Private enterprise, therefore, in the course of a year and a half, has given birth to thirty new colleges and more than two hundred high schools. To attempt to put a bar upon the acquisition of knowledge, to attempt to stifle the craving for education in this province either in the name of efficiency or in the name of re-orientation of educational policy or in the name of better and more efficient administration will be an attempt to stem the tide of the rising ocean. One is almost inclined to recall to memory the story of Canute and his Courtiers. I put the strongest possible plea for adequate financial aid from the tax-payers' monies for these educational institutions started by private enterprise. I recall to memory the drops of blood which have been shed by those who have dreamt of them, who have brought them into being, and have organised and maintained them without any subvention from the coffers of the State either in the past or even in the present.

I now review the picture of the activities of your University and my University in the matter of examinations. We are again the biggest examining body, as we are the biggest teaching and research institute in India. The Controller of Examinations, with the Additional Controller and the Assistant Controller, one Office Superintendent and 42 Assistants, has to hold 62 different types of examinations for candidates within the jurisdiction of this University. The total number of candidates at the different examinations of this University exceeded 80,000 in 1946. This figure rose to 1,00,000 in 1947. In 1948 the total number went

down to 62,000. 1949 figures again show a rise. The magnitude of the work of the Examination Section is neither realised nor visualised by our countrymen and our countrywomen. The Controller of Examinations has to make arrangements for the appointment of 2,500 Paper-setters. He has to collect more than 1,850 question papers from them. The questions have to be moderated, edited, printed and entered in the register. He has to scrutinise the applications of nearly 1,00,000 candidates for admission to the different examinations. He has to prepare statements of the question papers and scripts required at each of the 180 examination centres scattered far and wide. Admit cards of the examinees have to be written out and sent to different institutions. Question papers have to be packed and despatched with safety to their respective destinations. He has to collect 8,00,000 scripts from the examination centres, and distribute them amongst 3,400 Examiners, and Head Examiners. The marks of the number of candidates ranging between 62,000 and 1,00,000 have to be tabulated by 50 Tabulators. The results are then to be published. Certificates of the successful candidates varying between 40,000 and 50,000 have to be written out, signed and despatched. Prizes, medals and scholarships have to be awarded to successful candidates. All these involve constant correspondence with candidates, with the members of the public, Examiners, Head Examiners, Tabulators and Government officials at the different centres. The Controller's Department finds no rest in the year excepting during the month of October. 257 days out of 365 days in the year are consumed in the discharge of heavy responsibilities to the University and the Nation.

Indiscipline amongst a section of students, the adoption of unfair means at the examination centres, threats and assaults on invigilators which have become matters of regrettable daily occurrence, strikes for postponement of examinations and exhibition of temper and violence for the slightest act of omission or commission, imaginary or real, add to the complexities of the situation and make the problems almost insoluble. I plead earnestly to the public-spirited citizens of this province to see that the examinations at the various centres are conducted properly. Idle complaints and grievances ventilated in public, may just lie at rest till, at any rate, normalcy returns to our country.

I have attempted to present before you the picture of our achievements of a century. I shall address to you a few words now about our failures. The causes of our failures are varied and numerous. We have failed to raise moral values amongst many of our students. The system of education divorced from moral instruction and from spiritual upliftment slowly deadens into a mechanised system. The balance sheet of profit and loss only accentuates mercenary considerations. We have lived through two World Wars, with their attendant vices. We in Bengal have lived through war, famine, flood, frustration and strife. We reap today, the bitter fruits of political, economical and social maladjustment in India. Bengal stands divided, 'childless and throneless in her voiceless woe.' We have not been able to develop amongst our pupils that civic sense which does not insist merely upon the enforcement of

fundamental rights. We have not been able to inspire disciplined thought. We have hesitated to demand of all that sacrifice which makes nations great. We have not been able to engender in our pupils that loyalty and devotion to the *Alma Mater* which are the hall-marks of reputed universities in the West. Youth in every country in the world, is restless. We have not been able, due to geographical, political and economic reasons, to canalise the restless spirit of the youth of the country. If we could instil in their minds the imperative necessity of performing national and social service, if we could congregate them, as students and citizens elsewhere are congregated in religious faiths, if we had the power to inspire them to make supreme sacrifices for the defence of our beloved land, if we could introduce conscription for national services including the defence services of the country, our leaders of the morrow would have blossomed forth in the world.

Throughout the centuries, through which these territories washed by the sacred waters of the Ganges have passed, Bengal has had an independence and an integrity of her own. We cannot afford to forget that here within these territories was born "the Light of Asia." Here was evolved the language which brought solace to millions, in days, when Sanskrit was translated from the language of the gods into the language of men. Here within these territories was added a system of philosophy which gloriously lives by the foremost philosophical systems of the world. Here in these territories were evolved that character and that script which yet today rule more provinces and territories

than our own. Here in these territories a son of Bengal solved the problem of religious equality based on faith and love. From these territories, we had the privilege through the mist of time, to send out sailors and torch-bearers of Indian culture to far-off lands, across unchartered oceans.

With the acquisition of independence by India, Calcutta has secured a new significance. Calcutta ceased to be the imperial capital of India nearly forty years ago. Calcutta is not the political capital of India today; yet she is the cultural and the commercial capital of India. She looks east as Bombay looks west. On the University of Calcutta has fallen the supreme task of resurrecting that culture which in by-gone centuries brought peace and good-will amongst the people of the whole of south-eastern Asia.

Our aspirations therefore are great. We claim inheritance from battered Nalanda of ancient times. We are just a century old. Nalanda shed its lustre upon the whole of Asia for more than ten centuries. Our first ambition is to make every student a man—that man we hope to make a gentleman. Our ambition is to hold an honoured place amongst all the great seats of learning, past and present, in the world. Our ambition is to serve as a laboratory for all experiments in the country,—social, political and economic. Our ambition is to effect an integration of our University with our national activities in the domain of humanities, in the domain of industry, of science and technology, commerce and agriculture. We do not propose to live like frogs in the well. We want to maintain intimate

and affectionate relationships with other centres of culture in India and abroad.

During the year that has gone by, we heard with religious attention and reverent admiration lectures from scholars of world renown. Sir John Madsen, Professor of Electrical Engineering in the University of Sidney and Chairman of Radio Research Board of Australia, Leader of the Australian Delegation to the All-India Science Congress, made us familiar with the position of research in Australia. Sir Philip Kerr Grant, Professor of Physics in the University of Adelaide, one of the foremost Physicists in Australia talked to us about the study of Physics in Australia. Australia, we must not forget, is yet an immense agricultural country. Professor Renou of the University of Paris, a great scholar in the domain of Indology, delivered to our teachers and students a course of lectures on the influence of India on French literature and culture.

On the invitation of the American Association of Universities, we have in our turn deputed Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar to lecture to the American Universities and centres of learning. A proposal for exchange of professors on Indology between the University of Rome and our University is in the process of negotiation.

Last year I had the privilege of attending a conference of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of University Colleges included within the Commonwealth of Nations and the British Empire in England. On behalf of the Government of India, I had the proud privilege of representing India at the Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisa-

tion (UNESCO) at Beirut in Lebanon. I came into contact with mighty minds in the domain of culture, law and politics throughout the world and I have laid my humble experience at the altar of our University.

Two proposals, one by the Government of West Bengal and the other by the Government of India, are attempting to grapple with the educational problems of this province and of India. The Government of West Bengal has been piloting the Secondary Education Board Bill through the provincial legislature. The attitude of this University to the Secondary Education Board Bill is well-known. This University has insisted on the acceptance of four fundamental propositions. Firstly, the proposed Secondary Education Board should have definite objectives. The only aim of the Board must not be concentration of authority in the hands of the Government, reformed or unreformed. Secondly, the Secondary Board must be properly organised so as to be a reservoir of men with actual teaching experience in schools and colleges, autonomous in its functions, enjoying the maximum possible academic independence, freed from the trammels of University tradition as also the incubus of a bureaucracy. Thirdly, the Secondary Education Board must have adequate financial guarantees from the State so that contented teachers may function properly and that the Secondary Education Board in this province may be both self-contained and self-sufficient. Fourthly, this University should be in a position to maintain the inherent right of every University in the world to regulate its admission test, and if legislation invests the Board with the power of

conducting and regulating a School Leaving Examination, this University must have adequate statutory financial guarantees about the loss of its revenues. We must not forget that the Universities in our neighbouring provinces are yet custodians of their Matriculation Examinations. The draft Secondary Education Board Bill is on public view.

The second proposal to which I must refer relates to the appointment of the Universities Commission by the Government of India. The difficulties of the Universities Commission are indeed great. University education in India today, with three notable exceptions on historical and political grounds, is a provincial subject. The Universities Commission will have to consider and our Constituent Assembly will have to decide whether or not University education should be a subject included within the concurrent legislative list. The difficulties of such a proposal are great. We must guard against the possibilities of distance not lending enchantment to the view. Provincial Governments may not take as much interest in the financial positions of Universities within their jurisdiction as heretofore. So far as is known, neither the Government at the centre nor the Governments of the provinces have given financial guarantees to the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission. The Universities Commission will have to recommend to the Governments concerned their assessment of financial contributions to Universities throughout the Union and the manner and the method of the disbursement of such State grants. The Universities Commission will have to judge about the

existing and the future relationships between Universities in India and their respective Governments. The Universities Commission will have to give a verdict on the question whether the universities in India should be State organs as in the Continent of Europe or as in Latin America or whether they should thrive and prosper on the model of universities of the United Kingdom or of the United States of America. A desire for standardization of all our universities to a set system or pattern, will reduce our universities to dull uniformity and is sure to curtail their utility.

Over all theoretical discussions about the utility or the futility of university education towers the question of finance. Due to partition, this University has suffered an annual loss of revenue to the extent of nearly ten lacs. That yawning gap in our finance has not yet been bridged by the Provincial Government or the Government at the Centre.

May I on my behalf and on behalf of the Senate of the University of Calcutta, offer our grateful thanks to the Government of West Bengal, specially to its head the Hon'ble Premier Dr. B. C. Roy, for the generous grant of 15 lacs and 26 thousand rupees to this University in their budget for the year 1949-50 and the Government of India for the advance grant last year of 2 lacs and 25 thousand rupees for purposes of developing and expanding our post-graduate departments of Applied Physics and Chemistry. The Government of India has also granted us an interest-free loan of Rs. 50,000 for the construction of hostels for Science students. It has also paid us Rs. 60,000 for the year 1948-49 for researches in Nuclear Physics and a lump sum of 3 lacs and 50 thousand rupees for the construc-

tion of buildings for that purpose. The Government of West Bengal granted the sum of 14 lacs and 64 thousand rupees to this University last year. That Government has furthermore just offered to pay us a loan of 25 lacs of rupees for the expansion of the University College of Science. The loan is repayable with interest within thirty years' time. Yesterday, the 18th March, 1949, I received a most welcome communication from the Government of India offering this University the following sums of money in three categories :

(1) Capital Grant for building purposes and equipments, (2) Recurring Grant and (3) Interest-free loan for the purpose of further developing the departments of Applied Physics, Radio Physics and Electronics and Applied Chemistry. The Building Grant will be extended for a period of three years. The Equipment Grant will cover a period of four years. The Interest-free loan is intended for residence of Science students. For the purpose of building the maximum amount payable to the University is nine lacs seventy-nine thousand. For the purpose of equipment the maximum amount is Rupees seven lacs sixty-seven thousand. The Recurring Grant every year will be Rupees two lacs nineteen thousand. The Interest-free loan for residence of students will be Rupees two lacs sixty-seven thousand. All told the Capital Grant comes to Rupees twenty lacs; out of which Rupees two lacs fifty-four thousand represent interest-free loan repayable by the University in thirty-three equal annual instalments, the first of such payment is to begin from 1951. The Government of India has directed me to withdraw the sum of Rupees four lacs thirty thousand before 31st March, 1949, by way of advanced grant, the accounts to be adjusted at the close of the transactions. Such bounties

are almost unknown to Universities in India. The promise of the Government of India to grant subvention to this University to the extent of 2 lacs and 50 thousand rupees for the purpose of the erection of a building for the All-India Institute of Social Welfare still stands. I regret, however, that our Provincial Government has not found it possible yet to make its grant to this University statutory in character. Our daughter Universities at Dacca and Gauhati both enjoy this essential measure of financial security.

Last year this University secured from Rai Bahadur Bisweswar Lall Moti Lall Halwasiya Trust the sum of Rs 5,000 for the purpose of founding a lectureship on the glories of Rajasthan. We have secured the sum of Rs. 1,724-11-0 from the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta for the purpose of awarding a prize on philosophy of religion. The sum of Rs. 8,000 has been donated by Mr. Shyamlal Nayak for the encouragement of Matriculates from Midnapore. I hope Midnapore with its glorious traditions of past will ere long have a fully equipped Technological College at Kharagpur and a Nautical School at Kolaghat. The geographical, economic and industrial importance of these two places can easily be understood. We have also received from the Reception Committees of the All-India Economic Conference as also the All-India Commerce Conference, sessions of which were held under the auspices of the University of Calcutta, with its Vice-Chancellor as the Chairman of the Reception Committee, the sums of Rs. 4,600 and Rs. 4,200 respectively. The donation made by the All-India Economic Conference will, it is understood, be utilised for the erection and equipment of a Chair in

Economics to perpetuate the memory of R. C. Dutt of revered memory, great as a patriot, great as a scholar, great as a writer, great as a champion of economic freedom in our country.

Fellow graduates of the University of Calcutta, may I now take the liberty of addressing a few words to you today ? I know, advice in these days as in the days of Thomas Carlyle, is seldom listened to. Leadership is often challenged today, age and experience are held to be rusty and crusty traditions of a bygone age. Today is a red-letter day in your lives. It is a great day also for your *Alma Mater*. We have had less than hundred such days in the course of nearly hundred years of our life. Do not regard this Convocation as a mere formal congregation. Do not characterise its proceedings as mere priest-ridden rituals. Do not regard the charge which I had the privilege of administering to you today, namely that by habit and conversation you may prove yourselves worthy of the degrees which have been conferred on you, as useless and worthless chants. Do not treat your diplomas as mere parchment papers. They are invaluable symbols. Symbols in life have demanded untold sacrifices from men and women who have stood by them. For the flag of a country how many lives have not been laid down in the course of history? For religion, for nationality and for liberty has not the world, for centuries, grovelled through a welter of blood? Remember that everybody who is anybody in the land of ours is a child of the University. Your *Alma Mater* demands of you disciplined thought, regulated conduct, moral and spiritual upliftment.

We have indeed secured liberty. Remember that liberty is not license. We have acquired independence. Remember that independence is not impertinence. Age has the century-old habit of casting longing, lingering looks behind. Youth looks forward to the future with beaming faces, lighted with divine hopes. Will you, graduates of the University of Calcutta, not be able to span the past and the future ? Our freedom is less than two years old. Will you not be able to nurture this freedom into glorious adolescence so that all of us may hold our heads high in the councils of the nations of the world ? For this, you have to undergo tremendous sacrifices. Despise not the immemorial traditions of your great country. In your speech and in your action you must always bear in mind that you are sons or you are daughters of Mother India. Do not, pray, agonise Her soul by indisciplined thought, ungentlemanly action, irresponsible talk. The height, the length, the breadth of the greatness of your culture will be assessed by the world at large, by what you do in your lives after you leave the portals of your University. The University of today and of the future, will await with bated breath to learn from you that you have succeeded in your mission. The world today is surrounded by fear and sorrow. India herself stands on the cross-road of history. Will the road be trodden by you as a road of mud and dust or will that road be enlivened by your firm treads ? Life is short, art is long. May you, when your day's work is done, have a night's sweet repose in the comforting faith of something attempted, something done. That something attempted, that something

done, must be as great as your country is great! The world today is indeed enveloped in gloom. You will have to light there a light which will never die. Let us all with one voice pray to Him on high—

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene,—one step is enough for me.

Graduates of my University, go forth to the world. Show the world the 'mettle of your pasture'. Go forth to conquer passions and prejudices, poverty and sickness with the blessings of us all.

*BANDE MATARAM*











